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INFO RUEHZG/NATO EU COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHHE/AMEMBASSY HELSINKI PRIORITY 1866
RUEHKV/AMEMBASSY KYIV PRIORITY 0440
RUEHMO/AMEMBASSY MOSCOW PRIORITY 1708
RUEHSM/AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM PRIORITY 4669
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C O N F I D E N T I A L THE HAGUE 000330

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STATE FOR EUR A/S FRIED, VCI A/S DESUTTER, ISN A/S ROOD
NSC FOR STEPHENS AND ANSLEY
OSD/P FOR GREEN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/22/2017

TAGS: EZ MARR PL PREL RS NL

SUBJECT: NETHERLANDS: INITIAL RESPONSE TO DEMARCHE ON
RUSSIAN THREATS AGAINST MISSILE DEFENSE

REF: STATE 21640

Classified By: CDA Chat Blakeman, reasons 1.4 (b,d)

¶1. (C) Summary: Post delivered reftel points to MFA working level contacts on February 22; we will engage at higher levels as soon as possible, but this may take several days as the new government was sworn in today. In the meantime, the initial response from the MFA working level suggests the Dutch oppose recent "inflammatory rhetoric" from Moscow concerning missile defense in Poland and the Czech Republic, and will focus efforts at the NATO-Russia Council to push back on Russian rhetoric. They view recent Russian behavior -- including Russian President Putin's speech in Munich -- as a "cry for attention," which may require even greater transparency from the United States and NATO. MFA Special Advisor for Security Affairs Anthony van der Togt discussed these issues on February 22. End summary.

Oppose Rhetoric, Albeit Tacitly

¶2. (C) Van der Togt is the MFA's Special Advisor for the OSCE, but is a Russia expert and currently the point person on assessing Russian President Putin's speech in Munich. He said the GONL opposes the "inflammatory rhetoric" coming out of Moscow, but explained the Dutch are currently constrained from making any public statements while undergoing their governmental coalition transition. He said the GONL was currently drafting points for its delegation to NATO for use in the NATO Russia Council (NRC) to push back on recent Russian public statements.

¶3. (C) Van der Togt appreciated reftel points and information regarding continued U.S consultations with Russia on our missile defense policy, and noted that NSA Stephen Hadley had made similar comments in Brussels. Van der Togt said German Foreign Minister Steinmeier will soon be paying new Dutch Foreign Minister Maxime Verhagen a visit in The Hague, and Russian belligerence will be on the agenda -- information of U.S. consultations with Russia on missile defense will no doubt prove helpful, van der Togt said.

Cry For Attention

14. (C) Van der Togt said Putin's speech at Munich and recent Russian threats suggest Moscow is frustrated that "things are not going its way" and the age-old Russian paranoia only feeds the perception in Moscow that "something is being cooked up behind the scenes." Van der Togt agreed that much of the rhetoric was aimed at Russian domestic consumption, especially as Putin works to place his successors in power. Van der Togt also argued that Moscow's recent bad behavior reflects a desire to force further negotiations, both bilaterally with the U.S. and with NATO, to amplify Russia's relevance.

Need for Greater Transparency

15. (C) While Van der Togt appreciated reftel points, he suggested even greater transparency -- if possible -- may be necessary. He said Putin's speech reflects a Russia that for whatever reason "feels neglected and mistreated." Van der Togt pointed to historical Russian complexes on encirclement and the added importance of the NRC, which has not lived up to its potential. He said that the Netherlands, along with other allies, has stressed repeatedly that a NATO on Russia's borders poses no threat and actually improves Russian security -- but that message clearly is not sinking in.

BLAKEMAN